Government of India, on the request of the States Concerned, provide financial assistance through Market Intervention Scheme. During 2002-03 the Market Intervention Scheme has been implemented in the States of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal where, under the scheme, potato has been procured from farmers @ Rs.190 per qtl. and Rs.200 per qtl. respectively.

Besides, with a view to create new outlets for utilizing the surplus potato production, the Government of Uttar Pradesh is providing assistance for transport of potato outside the State @Rs.250 per tonne.

(c) Yes, Sir. The potato production in the country has increased from 4.81 Million Tonnes during 1970-71 to 24.08 Million Tonne in the year 2001-02.

(d) The Government of India, Department of Commerce, through Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority have established four potato Agri-Export Zones in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh for promoting export of potato from the country. The State Government of Uttar Pradesh is also providing financial assistance @ Rs.1000 per tonne for facilitating export of potato.

Agricultural growth rate

570. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:-

(a) whether the agricultural growth rate registered a decline of 3.2 per cent during 2002-03 against growth of 5.7 per cent in 2001-02;

(b) if so, the factors responsible for a steep fall in agricultural growth rate;

(c) whether new plans have been formulated to increase the growth rate during 2003-04; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV):(a) According to the advance estimates released by the Central Statistical Organization in the month of June, 2003 the growth rate in Agriculture, including Allied Sectors, in the year 2002-03 is (-) 3.2 per cent as compared to 5.7 per cent in the year 2001-02.

(b) The negative growth of agriculture in 2002-03 is due to severe drought in several parts of the country. The year 2002 was the first all-India drought year after a continuous spell of 14 good monsoons that followed the previous all-India drought year of 1987.

(c) and (d) Keeping in view the significant share of horticulture in agriculture and its potential in boosting the agricultural growth, the Union Budget 2003-04 has proposed a new Central Sector Scheme on Hi-tech Horticulture and Precision Farming. The major components of the scheme will be use of hi-tech interventions like fertigation, use of biotechnological tools, green food production, and hi-tech green houses.

Drought relief to Rajasthan

†571. SHRI D.P. YADAV: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) Government's norms for providing assistance to farmers of Rajasthan under the drought relief fund;

(b) whether Government have received details with regard to drought relief from the State Government;

(c) whether Government are planning to give more drought relief to the farmers of the State; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE(SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV):(a) to (d) Due to the severity of the drought faced by the State, assistance at a more liberal scale was provided—foodgrains and funds were allocated to

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.